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TAGS: PTER PREL MARR MOPS AG NG ML MR

SUBJECT: AFRICOM COMMANDER GENERAL WARD'S MEETING WITH  
ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs a.i. William Jordan. Reasons: 1.4 (b)  
, (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Foreign Minister Medelci registered AFRICOM General Ward's message that AFRICOM's mission was to reinforce African nations' own security efforts and not establish bases. The minister detailed Algeria's efforts within the African Union and regional partners to promote security and conflict resolution throughout Africa. It was committed to partnership with its immediate neighbors to the south to fight terrorists and the trafficking and kidnapping that financed terrorism. Medelci said self-determination for Western Sahara was non-negotiable. He supported increased U.S.-Algerian cooperation in regional security. End summary

Algeria's Foreign Policy Objectives

¶2. (C) AFRICOM Commander General William E. Ward met Algerian Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci at the MFA November 26. The General was accompanied by the Ambassador, AFRICOM Foreign Policy Adviser Dr. Raymond Brown, Embassy DATT Col. Tichenor, Embassy OSC head Maj. Phillips, AFRICOM Strategic Plans and Policies Capt. Claude Galluzzo, AFRICOM Public Affairs Officer Col. Franklin Childress, and Pol-Econ Chief Bosshart (notetaker). Sitting with the Foreign Minister were Minister Delegate for African and Maghreb Affairs Abdelkader Messahel, the new Director General for the Americas Sabri Boukhadoum, U.S. desk director Ali Drouiche, several other MFA officials, General Nourredine Mekri, Director of the Directorate of External Relations and Cooperation (DREC), and Major General Abdelhamid Ghriss, Chief of Organization and Logistic Department of the National Popular Army (ANP). The Foreign Minister opened the meeting by declaring that U.S.-Algerian relations had reached a new level and quality. He outlined Algeria's major domestic and foreign objectives: 1) internal peace and national reconciliation after the war with terrorism in the 1990s; 2) economic and social development; and 3) consolidated relations with key partners and with multilateral institutions, especially with the U.S. Algeria continued to advance on all three goals.

¶3. (C) Recent high-level USG visits (DASD Huddleston, NEA A/S Feltman, and now General Ward), Medelci continued, had allowed an exchange of views on larger security issues and how we could mitigate conflicts. Algeria was diversifying its economy beyond energy, where overreliance on hydrocarbons created constraints and vulnerabilities. Medelci noted that the U.S. was a factor in all major Algerian foreign policy issues: disarmament, the Middle East, and Western Sahara.

## African Security Challenges

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¶ 14. (C) Medelci gave the floor to Minister Delegate Messahel, who turned the discussion to African security affairs. He began by acknowledging that General Ward had met President Bouteflika previously on this trip and stated that Bouteflika was an "Africa Man" with a personal appreciation for Mali. He explained that Algeria engaged centrally with the African Union, which had succeeded the Organization of African Unity when that organization succeeded in freeing the continent of colonization -- except for the Western Sahara. The AU now was concerned with the continent's democracy, development, and security. President Obama's speech in Accra encapsulated the challenges the continent faced. The President of Algeria was personally committed to making Algeria a partner in achieving peace, stability, and security in Africa. Messahel said he himself had led the AU delegation that negotiated the Algiers Accords that brought a settlement of the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict, a process in which he had worked with U.S. diplomats. Messahel said that peace was the guiding principle of Algerian action in Africa, where it worked closely with the African Union and its Peace and Security Commission, the Committee of Wise Men, and the African Standby Force.

## Regional Efforts Against Terrorism

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¶ 15. (C) Messahel said that after colonialism and regional conflicts, the third issue facing the continent was terrorism. Algeria hosted the African Center for the Study

and Research of Terrorism (CAERT) since its establishment in ¶ 2002. Algeria had helped engineer an AU declaration against terrorism and a plan of action. But Algeria's major preoccupation is the evolution of events on its southern border. There is a huge and largely uncontrolled area open to terrorists, including groups being forced out of the north of Algeria, which are very mobile and deal in drugs, illegal migration, and all forms of trafficking. The second issue for Algeria in this regard is Somalia, al-Shabaab, and al-Qa'ida's various regional organizations. He said that for both terrorism issues, Algeria's approach is to do its best to be supportive of its African brothers in their efforts.

¶ 16. (C) Messahel pointed to Algeria's southern neighbors Niger, Mali, and Mauritania, where he said the main challenges were democracy, security, and development. While Algeria was engaged with Africa on these challenges, security must be the first priority. Algeria wants to help these three countries mobilize against terrorist forces in the region. Algeria and these countries have the means and capabilities but must do the job together as a coordinated effort. Niger was very cooperative on counterterrorism, but there continues to be some "lack of understanding" in Mali. Exactly a year earlier, Messahel had been in Bamako to prepare regional counterterrorism cooperation. He had met the Malian Foreign Minister at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit. Algerian Foreign Minister Medelci had been in Bamako. But there is still no date for a summit. Messahel said that for several months, the Malians had pleaded inability to fight terrorism because they were confronted by a Tuareg rebellion. With peace now restored, Messahel argued, Mali should be able to concentrate its forces against terrorism.

¶ 17. (C) Messahel highlighted the contribution of kidnappings for ransom to terrorist financing in the Sahel region. There was a legal vacuum on this issue in international conventions and resolutions. The AU summit in Addis Ababa earlier this year had discussed the issue. Algeria was initiating action in the UN to remedy this. This would take time, although Algeria was happy that it enjoyed UK support. In renewing UN Security Council Resolution 1267 this year, states should insert a paragraph on ransom payments.

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¶18. (C) Turning to Western Sahara, Messahel said that self-determination was a non-negotiable principle for Algeria. The Sahrawi should have the opportunity to vote in a referendum between joining Morocco, autonomy, or independence. Algeria had been clear on this with all previous UN Personal Envoys, including James Baker and now Christopher Ross. Morocco's friends should convince it to accept self-determination and UN resolutions. The status quo helped no one. Beyond Algeria's immediate region, Algeria had very close ties and conferred often on the future of the continent with South Africa, Nigeria, and Ethiopia.

AFRICOM'S Role on the Continent

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¶19. (C) General Ward said the U.S. recognized Algeria's stability-promoting role in the region. While AFRICOM's primary focus was security, it also recognized the social and development dimensions of stability. The U.S. recognized the importance of bilateral cooperation, and also supported the efforts of the AU and its Peace and Security Council, led by Algerian diplomat Ramtane Lamamra, as well as the AU Standby Force. The General meets frequently in Washington with the President, the Departments of Defense and State, and with Congress to explain regional issues and how AFRICOM's assistance in its capacity building and support role is beneficial to Africa's advancement.

¶10. (C) As for AFRICOM, its role is to support efforts by Algeria and other African countries against terrorism and all forms of trafficking. If successful, this would benefit the whole world. AFRICOM supports Algeria's regional objectives, such as the Bamako summit. Operation Enduring Freedom Trans-Sahara (OEF-TS) works with partners to build the capacity to meet their security objectives. The General said his visit had helped him understand Algeria's strategic objectives. General Ward continued, saying that since its establishment two years ago, AFRICOM had demonstrated it did not seek to establish bases, take over what African countries were doing, or move its headquarters to Africa. Its

objective was instead to help Africans in what they were already doing on security. General Ward emphasized that AFRICOM does not make U.S. policy but supports that policy, which is formulated by the civilian political leaders of the U.S. The programs AFRICOM supports would only be those requested by Algeria. General Ward stated that he intended his headquarters to remain in Stuttgart, Germany, and has no intention to place it elsewhere.

Deeper Causes of Terrorism

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¶11. (C) Medelci expressed appreciation that AFRICOM had developed a global approach that recognized that security was not geographically divisible and that it had economic and social aspects. The roots of terrorism had to be understood as coming from injustice in areas such as the Middle East and Afghanistan, which had exported terrorism to the Sahel. Another source of terrorism was the crisis in the Middle East; resolving that conflict would help solve terrorism. Political leaders also had to consult with elected representatives of the people, e.g., in the legislature. Countries could do nothing without good laws. Medelci concluded that political leaders must at times convince lawmakers to change laws -- or UN Security Council resolutions. Medelci closed by saying that Algeria welcomed working with the U.S. on this global perspective and that General Ward should return to Algeria soon.

¶12. (C) General Ward concluded by stating that the African continent deserved stability. The Ambassador observed that continuing U.S.-Algerian contact was paramount. The General was an effective advocate for Africa in Washington D.C. The Ambassador suggested that Foreign Minister Medelci visit Washington soon.

JORDAN